Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand three hundred and sixty-seventh plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 2 September 2015, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Ms. Dell Higgie ..... (New Zealand)

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The President: I call to order the 1367th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As noted in the opening statement by New Zealand to the plenary last week, which was delivered by my deputy because of my absence to attend the first Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty in Cancún, it is an honour for my country to preside over the Conference on Disarmament at the end of its 2015 session.

The focus of the New Zealand presidency is, of course, on achieving agreement on the annual report of the Conference, on which we will shortly commence our collective work. Before outlining the process for this morning's informal meeting on the Conference's report, I do have one delegation on my list of speakers.

Mr. Omarov, representative of Kazakhstan, you have the floor.

Mr. Omarov (Kazakhstan): Madam President, as our delegation is taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, I would like to congratulate New Zealand on its assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of our delegation's full support, in particular for the smooth finalization of the Conference's annual report. I wish also to express my appreciation to your predecessors for the energetic endeavours exerted during their tenures.

Before continuing with today's plenary meeting, I would like to offer my best wishes to everyone here on the occasion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, which was observed on 29 August. It was in December 2009 that the United Nations General Assembly, at its sixty-fourth session, adopted a resolution declaring 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. This resolution was adopted at the behest of my country and numerous co-sponsors to commemorate under United Nations auspices the signing of a historic decree by the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayevto, to close the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site.

That initiative of Kazakhstan was unanimously supported by all United Nations Member States. By supporting the resolution, Member States entered into a firm commitment for further action against nuclear tests. It serves our common goal to live in a nuclear-weapon-free world.

From 1949 to 1989, the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site was the prime venue used by the Soviet Union to conduct over 500 nuclear-weapon tests over an area of approximately 18,000 square kilometres. More than 1.5 million unsuspecting people were exposed to devastating levels of radiation, the effects of which are still borne today by current generations. Furthermore, an immense territory comparable to the size of some European countries has been contaminated with radiation.

We are very grateful to the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his visit to the former nuclear test site in April 2010 and his praise for the efforts made by Kazakhstan to reduce the global nuclear threat.

Furthermore, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that 25 fellows of the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme will visit the ground zero of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in October this year. We believe this field experience for young fellows will help in the further promotion of nuclear disarmament.

Together with the international community and organizations, in particular the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Kazakhstan continues to draw public attention to nuclear disarmament and test ban issues. Kazakhstan and Japan, as the Co-Presidents of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty article XIV Conference, have a strong commitment to make every effort to promote the early entry into force of the Treaty. Since the Treaty was signed in 1996, it has travelled an uneasy but nevertheless

successful path. Currently, 184 countries around the world have joined the Treaty, and 164 have completed their internal procedures to bring the Treaty into force. This testifies to the fact that the ongoing work of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization is actually close to completion.

However, several influential States still abstain from signing and ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which formally allows some States to continue nuclear testing and the threshold States to develop their own nuclear missile programmes with impunity.

Today, we must exert our joint efforts to convince the States which have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty to do so. A voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing observed by the world Powers today, though an important factor of nuclear security, is clearly insufficient and cannot serve as an alternative to a legally binding document such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

In support of our common efforts, Kazakhstan has initiated the Abolish Testing: Our Mission (ATOM) project. The objective of this initiative is to mobilize the international community to raise awareness of the nuclear threat and to press for action to end it. Already, around 200,000 people from more than 100 countries have signed the ATOM project's online petition to global leaders demanding progress in ratification of the Treaty. Supporters and followers of the ATOM project are urged to sign a petition to stop nuclear weapon tests. With your support, the ATOM project can become an influential campaign to change the world and secure the future for generations to come.

We recognize the significant importance of the process which began with the holding of conferences on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna. As a nation that has experienced the disastrous consequences of nuclear explosions, Kazakhstan fully supports this initiative. In this regard, I would like to point out that Kazakhstan has supported the Humanitarian Pledge presented by Austria.

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the tragic nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the first in the history of humanity. Next year it will already be 20 years since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was opened for signature. On 29 August next year, we will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site closure.

All these dates remind us that time is running out. We need resolute action to establish a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The President: I thank the representative of Kazakhstan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this point?

That does not seem to be the case. I would like now to inform colleagues of an important opportunity which we will have at the formal plenary on 15 September to hear from the incoming Chair of the First Committee for the upcoming session of the General Assembly, Ambassador Karel van Oosterom, the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations in New York. Certainly, as one of many colleagues here who attends each year the session of the First Committee, I would personally welcome the opportunity to hear in a timely fashion from the incoming Chair, so we are grateful for that opportunity to hear from Ambassador Oosterom.

Today's plenary, which will be followed immediately after by discussions in an informal format, will now move to the Conference's agenda item regarding consideration and adoption of the annual report to the General Assembly of the United Nations. I have prepared the draft report, which you have all received, with the assistance of the secretariat, for which I am duly grateful, and in accordance with rules 44 and 45 of the rules of

procedure. I do hope that all delegations will agree that the draft reflects the requirements set out in rule 45 that the report be factual and reflect the negotiations and work of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is a fact that, once again this year, successive presidencies have made significant efforts to achieve consensus on a programme of work. It is nonetheless sadly the case that, as in a number now of previous years, the Conference has not been able to reach agreement on a programme of work, nor this year has it again undertaken the substantive work which is its real raison d'être. I hope that colleagues agree that the draft report reflects fairly and appropriately both the intensive efforts undertaken to reach consensus and the lack of results on that to date.

As to our future work, following today's informal plenary meeting on the report and in order to move as expeditiously as possible, I anticipate, as was indicated in the schedule previously circulated to everyone, holding a further informal meeting in this chamber on the morning of Friday, 4 September, which is this coming Friday, beginning at 11 a.m.

Before I adjourn today's formal plenary meeting, is there any other delegation that wishes to take the floor at this point? I recognize the representative of Mexico.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico): Madam President, as this is the first time my delegation takes the floor during your presidency, please allow me to express our support and appreciation. Also, I would like to thank you for the first version of the draft report of the Conference. We believe that this first draft is a good basis for our work in order to fulfil the obligation to report to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

As this is the first opportunity we have to discuss the initial draft, for the record please allow me to share the comments of my delegation.

As stated during the plenary meetings held on 5 June and 17 August 2015, my delegation kindly requests that the report reflect its position concerning the adoption of the decision to re-establish an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work and a schedule of activities for the 2015 session. To do so, the delegation of Mexico kindly suggests the inclusion of the following paragraphs:

> "1. A delegation stated that it does not support either of these two decisions and that, as it understands consensus as a way to achieve a common aspiration to reach an agreement, its opposition to these decisions should not be considered as a veto.
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> "2. A delegation stated that the decisions regarding the re-establishment of the informal working group to produce a programme of work and regarding a schedule of activities can only be a simulation to pretend that the Conference is working, when it is not. Also, as a matter of principle, it simply cannot play a part in such an exercise of simulation."

Madam President, as our obligation, according to rule 45, as you just reminded us, is to elaborate a factual report to the General Assembly of the United Nations, my delegation will engage in our discussions and make further comments as needed in order to achieve this factual report.

The President: I thank the representative of Mexico for her statement and for the kind words she addressed to the Chair. Is there any other delegation that wishes to take the floor? I recognize the representative of South Africa.

Ms. Mancotywa-Kumsha (South Africa): Madam President, at the outset allow me to congratulate New Zealand on its assumption of the Conference presidency. I would like to assure you of the support and cooperation of South Africa for a successful conclusion of your mandate.

My delegation would also like to thank you for the briefing you provided on the draft annual report of the Conference to be presented to the United Nations General Assembly. South Africa would like to stress the importance of adequately reflecting what transpired in the 2015 session of the Conference in a balanced manner. We understand the constraints under which you operate, given the need to ensure consensus on the Conference's report. We also know that you have endeavoured to reflect these developments through the words "differing views of delegations are duly reflected in the plenary records of the session". However, since it was for the first time that two countries, including South Africa, elected not to participate in the informal discussions on the schedule of activities and the informal working group to develop a programme of work, we would have preferred to see this reality adequately reflected in the report.

For South Africa, this is a principled decision which was informed by the fact that these decisions are an illusion of progress in the Conference, and nothing substantive emerges as they are informal in nature. In this regard, South Africa has provided written comments.

In addition, South Africa would like to commend New Zealand for reflecting the remarks made by the United Nations Secretary-General in a balanced manner. South Africa would also like to commend New Zealand for reflecting the decision taken by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to withdraw from the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for her statement and for the kind words she addressed to the Chair. Is there any other delegation that would wish at this point to take the floor? I recognize the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Just a clarification, really. How do you wish to proceed? Are you going to read through the report paragraph by paragraph? Is this purely for opening comments? We are in an informal session now. Just tell us how we are going to go before we start thinking about the rest.

The President: My intention is to suspend the meeting after delegations here have completed any comments they wish to make at this point in the formal meeting and then to resume five minutes later in informal plenary mode. At that point, we will work through the report paragraph by paragraph, but with an opportunity for anyone to make remarks overall of a general nature at the outset, if that is their wish. Equally you can make remarks, as indeed South Africa and Mexico have done here now, in the plenary. The choice is yours, Ambassador.

I recognize the representative of Russia.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I have a question with regard to the interventions made by two of the delegations. Since it was originally envisaged that the discussion of the report would commence in an informal setting, it is rather unclear to me how the statements made at the plenary meeting are connected with the forthcoming informal consultations. It would be desirable to clarify the situation from the outset.

What I would say is that, since two delegations have made their proposals officially at the plenary meeting and there has been no discussion here, there is no point in our discussing them during the informal consultations.

The President: I thank the representative of Russia for his remarks. I think that as far as I can see it, it is rather clear the approach we are following here. It is exactly the approach followed traditionally each year in dealing with the report. Of course, there is always a plenary session and, of course, we have always tended to work informally in plenary after plenary sessions. It is entirely in accordance with the rules of procedure for delegations to deliver their comments whenever they want. There is nothing to prevent a colleague delivering a statement in a formal meeting — this happens indeed throughout the

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year. There is nothing to prevent a colleague delivering a statement in an informal meeting. It is the prerogative of colleagues to deliver their statements when they want. I am delighted if Russia wishes to deliver a statement now or later. It is entirely your prerogative, and I will look forward very much to hearing it.

The next speaker on the list is the representative of Belarus. Belarus, you have the floor.

Mr. Grinevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, we are pleased to see you in the presidency. It goes without saying that you can count on the full support of our delegation as you carry out your mandate.

Since two delegations have made statements on the content of the report, we will not comment on what has been said at this stage. We would like only to note that our delegation deeply regrets that two delegations refused to participate in the work of the subsidiary bodies created in the framework of the Conference and thus refused to participate in the brainstorming session to find a compromise option and commence the negotiating process at the Conference. It is of course a political decision on the part of those delegations, and we do not wish to discuss it further.

We would like our statement also to be included in line with procedure in the verbatim record of this plenary meeting.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement. Is there any further delegation that wishes to take the floor at this point? I see none. At this point, then, I suggest that we adjourn our formal plenary. The next formal plenary will take place next Tuesday, 8 September, at 10 a.m.

This concludes our meeting of today; the meeting is adjourned. We will need to wait for a few minutes to close the gallery and allow the technicians to make the necessary arrangements in order for our informal meeting to begin. There will be a five-minute break.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.